

## MANAGING YOUR INTERPRETING "BUSINESS"

**A**s an independent contractor-interpreter, you are essentially in business for yourself. Ever wonder what you can do to make your interpreting business a success? The key to success is in reality a combination of four ingredients: attitude, organization, honesty, and skill building. Let's take a look at each of these points.

### Attitude

Many folks dream of running their own businesses—they imagine a life of freedom from the demands of a supervisor or boss. The reality of the freelance interpreter, though, is that each contract—each client organization—plays the role of 'boss'. An interpreter who has contracted with four client organizations, therefore, must answer to at least four 'bosses'. Thus, one of the main challenges of the independent contractor is keeping all the clients happy—all the time. This is possible only if the interpreter is well organized in regard to schedules, assignments, accounting and follow-up.

### Organization

Clients appreciate and are more likely to enter into a long-term relationship with an interpreter who is well organized. In recent interviews with the editor of the Communicator Express, several interpreter service coordinators revealed that the number one reason they have terminated contracts with freelance interpreters is the contractor's failure to manage schedules and assignments.

Managing your schedule is not a difficult task, but it does require an initial investment of time and money, as well as regular upkeep. All successful independent contractors keep a calendar in which they make note of their appointments and any commitments that may affect their interpreting work. Some interpreters prefer a traditional appointment book, while other make use of electronic scheduling tools. Whatever the tool, it will only be of use to the interpreter if all assignments and all commitments are recorded within.

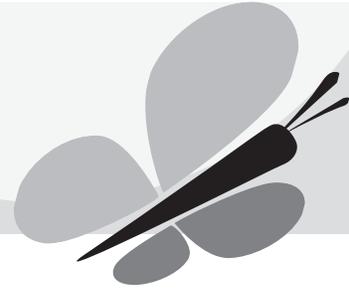
Interpreters must be careful not to double book their time slots. Nothing is more frustrating to a client organization than an interpreter who fails to report to assignments due to overbooking. Another scheduling consideration is travel—the independent contractor must estimate and block out a generous amount of time for driving, traffic and parking.

Most interpreting agencies and hospitals that hire independent contractors provide some sort of service verification form that must be



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completed by the interpreter after each assignment. Often, there is a window of time (hours or days) during which the interpreter must submit appropriate documentation to the contracting organization for purposes of billing and payment. If the interpreter fails to submit the required documentation, the contracting organization can neither bill the requestor of services nor pay the interpreter. Interpreter service coordinators have commented that interpreters who consistently fail to submit documentation after assignments are eventually terminated from service within their organizations.

As an independent contractor, you are responsible for keeping your own financial records and for paying local, state and federal taxes where applicable. Many professional interpreters who work with accounting software, such as Quicken or QuickBooks, report that this method allows them to avoid mathematical errors and easily match accounts received to specific assignments. By taking charge of their own business records, these interpreters cut down on unnecessary calls to their clients' accounting offices. Check your local computer or office supply store for the latest in home and small business accounting software.

### Honesty

Although as interpreters we sometimes feel like superheroes, in truth we're only human. And just like any other human, we sometimes make mistakes. Experienced interpreters comment that clients are more likely to forgive an interpreter's mistakes when the interpreter is quick to assume responsibility and does all that is possible to correct the situation.

Interpreter service coordinators are trained to spot the difference between an honest mistake and a deliberate deception. Administrators have shared stories of interpreters who invent elaborate schemes to cover-up their failure to complete assignments. In one case, an interpreter who missed an assignment and claimed to be stuck on the side of the road in a malfunctioning vehicle was spotted a short time later at a client organization in a different city. Another interpreter was caught subcontracting assignments to individuals who submitted service verification forms in the primary inter-

preter's name. In another case, an interpreter who was "tired" sent a family member to cover a medical appointment. Neither interpreter informed the client organization of their actions, and both were terminated for dishonest business practices.

Another facet of honesty is recognizing your limitations as an interpreter. Never accept an assignment for which you are not qualified. For example, a medical interpreter trained only in the consecutive mode would likely not accept a simultaneous conference interpreting assignment. As a general rule, interpret only in languages pairs for which you were trained and tested. Avoid accepting assignments outside your areas of expertise. This does not mean, however, that you cannot develop new areas of expertise over time, and this point brings us to our final ingredient for success in interpreting: skill-building.

### Skill-Building

Whether you are a new interpreter or a "veteran", pursue ongoing interpreter education. Join a professional interpreter association, attend skill-building workshops for medical interpreters, and keep your finger on the "pulse" of the profession by regularly reading new publications related to interpreting and language access. Invest in your professional growth by purchasing one or two quality bilingual medical dictionaries, and utilize Internet search engines (our personal favorite is [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) in regular searches for specialty glossaries and medical reference sites.

To further broaden your horizons, consider taking courses at a local community college. Most community colleges offer study opportunities in allied health, medical terminology, computer technology, and language.

We hope that this 'recipe for success' as an independent contractor-interpreter works for you! For additional tips on running your own interpreting business, see [http://www.atanet.org/chronicle/feature\\_article\\_january2006.php](http://www.atanet.org/chronicle/feature_article_january2006.php) for "Running Your Translating/Interpreting Business From Home" by M. Eta Trabing, a successful Spanish<>English interpreter and translator.

## IMIA CONFERENCE

Most successful freelance interpreters make it a point to attend professional gatherings. A great local opportunity for instruction and networking is "Pioneering Healthy Alliances", the 11th Annual International Medical Interpreters Association Conference to be held October 5-7 in Boston. What can you expect from the IMIA Annual Conference? Among this year's highlights are educational workshops, a National Certification Forum, an expert panel on remote interpreter education, the first-ever Medical Interpreter Job Fair, film screenings, live entertainment and much more! Registration is currently open at [www.mmia.org](http://www.mmia.org).

## REMINDERS FOR CCCS INTERPRETERS

Since the beginning of the year, the CCCS Interpreter Services Department has been on a campaign to update Interpreter Portfolios and invite each independent contractor to attend an all-new training program, the 8-hour **Medical Interpreter Foundations Training (MIFT)**. All CCCS interpreters are required to have attended the MIFT by December 2007.

These trainings have been held once a month and will continue to be held throughout the summer. Contact Gail Marinaccio at (781) 729-3736 x.106 or by email at [gmarinaccio@cccsorg.com](mailto:gmarinaccio@cccsorg.com) to reserve your seat for one of the following sessions:

Attend a two-part training:  
August 21 (4PM-8PM)  
August 23 (4PM-8PM)

Attend one of the following training sessions:  
September 27 (9AM-5PM)  
October 25 (9AM-5PM)  
November 19 (9AM-5PM)  
December 17 (9AM-5PM)

Active CCCS interpreters are also required to submit updated immunization records. Immunization records can be mailed to Gail Marinaccio at the CCCS headquarters in Woburn, MA. (The address appears in this newsletter at the bottom of each page.)

On behalf of the entire CCCS staff, Gail Marinaccio and Amanda Duross of the Interpreter Portfolio Update Team would like to thank the almost 100 interpreters who have successfully updated their records.

## INTERPRETER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AT CCCS

At CCCS, we are committed to interpreter education. This coming fall, the Cross Cultural Communication Institutes in Woburn, MA and Nashua, NH, will offer exciting new interpreter education opportunities. The following are descriptions of our course offerings in each location. To make education more accessible to working interpreters, we are offering evening and weekend programs at both of our facilities.

### CCCI New Hampshire

#### Art of Medical Interpretation 54-hour Certificate Program

Dates: September 15 - November 17 (Saturdays, 9AM-3PM)  
Location: CCCS New Hampshire Regional Office  
43 Technology Way, Suite 2E3, Nashua, NH 03060  
For directions, see [http://www.cccsorg.com/contact/directions\\_nh.html](http://www.cccsorg.com/contact/directions_nh.html)

Instructor: Vonessa Phillips Costa  
Guest Presenter: Dr. Richard S. Lane

This program targets interpreters at all levels and fosters an environment that gives each individual a measure of control over the learning process. Training sessions focus on interpreting technique, cultural competency and ethics, mastering medical terminology through the Samurai! method, developing specialized glossaries and increasing memory power. Learning is measured through role-play and interpreter evaluation tools.

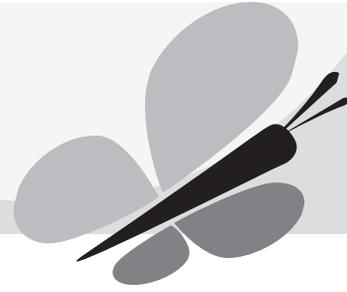
The Art of Medical Interpretation 54-hour training program has been approved by the American Translators Association for 5 Continuing Education Points. Class size is limited to 25 interpreters and features spoken languages only. Language coaches and target language glossaries will be provided to groups of 3 or more interpreters working in each target language.

All applicants must pass a mandatory pre-screening exam in English and target language(s) prior to acceptance in program. There is a pre-screening/application fee of \$30.

Regular tuition is \$595 per student. Active CCCS interpreters receive a 20% discount off the regular tuition rate. Ask about our payment installment plans.

For more information, contact Amanda Duross, NH Regional Coordinator  
Phone: 888-678-CCCS X.120  
Email: [aduross@cccsorg.com](mailto:aduross@cccsorg.com)

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### **Cross Cultural Issues and the Challenge of Palliative Care at the End of Life**

Date: November 6, 6PM-10PM  
 Location: CCCS New Hampshire Regional Office, 43 Technology Way, Suite 2E3, Nashua, NH 03060  
 For directions, see [http://www.cccsorg.com/contact/directions\\_nh.html](http://www.cccsorg.com/contact/directions_nh.html)

Instructor: Richard S. Lane, MD

This workshop will discuss the subspecialty of Palliative Care and how cross-cultural issues can arise in the practice of this work. Participants will discuss the difference between palliative medicine and hospice, and explore issues of sensitivity and competency. The group will review a complex palliative care case and see how we can move from cultural sensitivity to cultural competency in an end-of-life situation involving a patient and family from a non-dominant culture living in the United States.

Cost is \$40 per person. For more information, contact Amanda Duross, NH Regional Coordinator  
 Phone: 888-678-CCCS X.120  
 Email: [aduross@cccsorg.com](mailto:aduross@cccsorg.com)

### **CCCI Massachusetts Art of Medical Interpretation 54-hour Certificate Program**

Dates: September 13-December 20 (Thursdays, 6PM-10PM)  
 Location: Cross Cultural Communication Systems, Inc., 800 West Cummings Park, Suites 3800-3900, Woburn, MA 01801

Instructor: Vonessa Phillips Costa  
 Guest Presenter: Zarita Araujo-Lane, LICSW and Dr. Richard S. Lane

This program targets interpreters at all levels and fosters an environment that gives each individual a measure of control over the learning process. Training sessions focus on interpreting technique, cultural competency and ethics, mastering medical terminology through the Samurai! method, developing specialized glossaries and increasing memory power. Learning is measured through role-play and interpreter evaluation tools.

The Art of Medical Interpretation 54-hour training program has been approved by the American Translators Association for 5 Continuing Education Points. Class size is limited to 30 interpreters and features spoken languages only. Language coaches and target language glossaries will be provided to groups of 3 or more interpreters working in each target language.

All applicants must pass a mandatory pre-screening exam in English and target language(s) prior to acceptance in program. There is a pre-screening/application fee of \$30.

Regular tuition is \$675 per student. Active CCCS interpreters receive a 20% discount off the regular tuition rate. Ask about our payment installment plans.

For more information, contact Stefanie DiMeo, CCCI Program Coordinator  
 Phone: 781-729-3736 x.111  
 Email: [sdimeo@cccsorg.com](mailto:sdimeo@cccsorg.com)

### **Note-taking for Medical Interpreters**

Dates: September 26, 6PM-10PM  
 Location: Cross Cultural Communication Systems, Inc., 800 West Cummings Park, Suites 3800-3900, Woburn, MA 01801

Instructor: Frank Geoffrion

In this workshop, participants will learn when to take notes and how to decide what to write. Note taking will be explored as a supplement to memory, retention and recall. The instructor will present note taking systems and techniques such as the Rozan method, as well as the use of abbreviations and symbols.

Cost is \$40 per person. For more information, contact Stefanie DiMeo, CCCI Program Coordinator  
 Phone: 781-729-3736 x.111  
 Email: [sdimeo@cccsorg.com](mailto:sdimeo@cccsorg.com)

### **Fundamentals of Legal Interpretation**

Dates: September 16-November 25 (Sundays, 9AM-2PM)  
 Location: Cross Cultural Communication Systems, Inc., 800 West Cummings Park, Suites 3800-3900, Woburn, MA 01801

Instructor: Frank Geoffrion

This 60-hour workshop series will clarify the legal interpreter's role and explore guidelines for legal interpreters. Students will participate in a series of interpreting-related activities designed to encourage short-term and long-term memory development. Such activities include learning to "listen for meaning", memory exercises, shadowing, dual-task training, paraphrasing, and sight translation. Students will also develop an extensive vocabulary with concentration on terminology specific to legal matters. This program will also familiarize students with basic legal concepts. Language coaches and target language materials will be provided for groups of 4 or more interpreters working in the same language pair.

Regular tuition is \$750 per student. Active CCCS interpreters receive a 20% discount off the regular tuition rate. Ask about our payment installment plans.

For more information, contact Stefanie DiMeo, CCCI Program Coordinator  
 Phone: 781-729-3736 x.111  
 Email: [sdimeo@cccsorg.com](mailto:sdimeo@cccsorg.com)



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